

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 SY-05 OPR-02 PM-05 NSC-05
SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01
USIA-06 PRS-01 ACDA-12 HA-05 TRSE-00 AID-05 /094 W
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R 190400Z NOV 77
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8105
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 18330

CIFUPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, RP
SUBJECT: FIGHTING IN SOUTH CONTINUES

REF: MANILA 17215

1. SUMMARY: FIGHTING CONTINUES ON THE ZAMBOANGA PENINSULA AND THE ISLANDS OF JOLO AND BASILAN. SINCE RESUMPTION OF FIGHTING, AN ESTIMATED ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND CIVILIANS HAVE BEEN DISPLACED. IGESPIE THE GEOGRAPHICALLY LIMITED NATURE OF THE CURRENT FIGHTING, THE PHILIPPINE MILITARY IS BEGINNING TO BOLSTER SOME UNITS IN THE AREA.
END SUMMARY.

2. FIGHTING IN THE SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES APPEARS TO HAVE REMAINED AT A FAIRLY CONSTANT LEVEL OVER THE LAST
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SEVERAL WEEKS WITH MANILA'S NEWSPAPERS REPORTING FIRE FIGHTS, AMBUSHES, AND "TERRORIST INCIDENTS" ON AN ALMOST DAILY BASIS. THE CONFLICT IS STILL CONFINED LARGELY TO THE ZAMBOANGA PENINSULA, BASILAN AND JOLO, THOUGH SPORADIC FIGHTING HAS OCCURRED IN LANA DEL SUR AND THE COTABATO PROVINCES. THE MILITARY IS MAKING AN INTENSIVE EFFORT TO WEAKEN MNLF FORCES IN THE ZAMBOANGA AREA AND JOLO AND

BASILAN BY DENYING USE OF THE SEA FOR TRANSPORTATION AND RESUPPLY.

3. THE COSTS OF RENEWED FIGHTING ARE BEING FELT MOST SEVERELY BY CIVILIAN POPULATIONS IN THE AREAS OF CONFLICT. RELIABLE ESTIMATES PLACE CURRENT NUMBER OF REFUGEES AT ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND. THERE ARE NO AVAILABLE FIGURES ON RECENT CIVILIAN CASUALTIES. IN A SPEECH NOVEMBER 10, PRESIDENT MARCOS ESTIMATED THAT SINCE THE FIGHTING BEGAN IN 1973, BETWEEN THIRTY AND FIFTY THOUSAND CIVILIANS HAVE BEEN KILLED AND FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND TO ONE MILLION DISPLACED.

4. SOME ARMS AGAIN APPEAR TO BE FLOWING TO THE MNLF THROUGH SABAH, THOUGH PROBABLY WITHOUT THE ASSISTANCE OF THE SABAH GOVERNMENT. THE GOP, HOWEVER, IS NOW HAVING GREATER SKECESS THAN IT HAD PRIOR TO THE CEASEFIRE IN STOPPING THESE SHIPMENTS AT SEA. IN A CONVERSATION WITH THE DCM NOVEMBER 7, SECRETARY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE ENRILE INDICATED THAT EASTERN EUROPEAN ARMS, IN THIS CASE 81MM AND 87MM MORTARS, ARE BEING USED BY THE MNLF. HE DID NOT SPECULATE ON THE CHANNELS THROUGH WHICH THESE WEAPONS MIGHT HAVE PASSED INTO THE MNFL'S ARSENAL.

5. COMMENT: THE FIGHTING ON THE ZAMBOANGA PENINSULA AND THE ISLANDS OF JOLO AND BASILAN IS OF A SUSTAINED, PRE-CEASEFIRE NATURE. THE TESTING AND PROBING TACTICS UTILIZED
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BY BOTH THE MNLF AND THE AFP, WHICH PUNCTUATED THE PEACE OF THE CEASEFIRE, HAVE BEEN ABANDONED. WHILE THE CONFLICT REMAINS LOCALIZED, THERE ARE REPORTS THAT THE MNLF IS PREPARING TO INTENSIFY THE FIGHTING IN LANAOS AS SOON AS ITS UNITS THERE CAN ACCUMULATE SUFFICIENT WEAPONS. DURING HIS CONVERSATION WITH THE DCM ENRILE CLAIMED HE COULD NOT SPARE EVEN A COMPANY FOR DUTIES RELATED TO US BASES' SECURITY. WHILE THIS STATEMENT SEEMS AN EXAGGERATION IT MAY CONTAIN A KERNEL OF TRUTH. THE GOP IS CURRENTLY FILLING OUT ITS INVENTORY OF HOWITZERS AND AMMUNITION IN ANTICIPATION OF FORMING SEVERAL NEW UNITS. THE AFP SEEMS CONCERNED ABOUT THE TREND OF FIGHTING BUT, SO FAR NOT ALARMED. THEY LAMENT THAT THE MNLF WILL NOT ADOPT CONVENTIONAL TACTICS AND ENGAGE IN SET-PIECE BATTLES IN WHICH THE AFB CAN BRING THEIR SUPERIOR FIREPOWER TO BEAR.

NEWSOM

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Message Attributes

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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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